

City of Farmington Hills, Senior Division

The City of Farmington Hills, Michigan, is committed to raising awareness of healthy life choices for all its citizens, across age, ability and socio-economic levels. Older adults are among the first to take advantage of a combined nutrition and physical activity program called “Be Healthy, Get Fit.” Through this program, the Senior Division, within the Department of Special Services, is providing older adults with encouragement and a place to start.

The “Be Healthy, Get Fit” program was introduced in 2004 and gained wide support throughout the city. The kickoff event featured seminars, exhibits, activities, demonstrations, and healthy food choices in one setting. About 100 adults age 50 and older participated in line dances, Tai chi, and other activities. At the same time, participants received nutrition counseling, blood pressure screenings, and tasted food from a healthy food booth. The “Be Healthy, Get Fit” kickoff event culminated in a warm-up session and a walk. Participants received pedometers and journals to track their progress.

On an ongoing basis, the Senior Division supports older adults in their healthy life choices by offering a “Lite & Healthy” congregate lunch program every day. The division also established a twice-weekly walking group. A once-a-month check-up meeting grew out of the kick-off event, where participants track their progress, receive healthy recipes, and receive motivation and fitness tips. A highly visible “Be Healthy, Get Fit” bulletin board provides fitness class choices, health and wellness articles, nutrition tips, and healthy lifestyle benefits.

Many of the activities under the “Be Healthy, Get Fit” program were already being conducted by the Senior Division. The event provided an effective way to publicize their programs and services and increase visibility in the community.

Key to the success of the “Be Healthy, Get Fit” program was the cooperation between sponsors. Community sponsors included the local YMCA, Oakland County Health Department, Oakland County Nutrition Services, and private businesses. With good community support and effective publicity, the program thrives. The key message, improving the health of older adults, inspires passion in both the providers and the participants.

The Senior Division says the program’s success is due to their efforts to make healthy lifestyle choices fun, affordable, and readily available. In addition, bringing services provided by the Senior Division together with other services offered by the Department of Special Services, allowed the “Be Healthy, Get Fit” program to be offered on a much larger scale. The project reinforced the value of combining the efforts of different agencies and divisions and sharing resources to accomplish a goal.

As a result of the “Be Healthy, Get Fit” program, a larger “Be Healthy, Get Fit Fair” is being planned. This event will be similar to the kick-off event, but the activities and

lifestyle choices will target the whole family. The fair partners include seven divisions within the Department of Special Services and will feature 26 for-profit exhibitors, 13 non-profit agencies, 15 service clubs, and various special interest clubs such as cycling, tennis, skateboarding, and martial arts. Several thousand attendees are expected.